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QUESTION OF PALESTINE

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Letter dated 26 September 1996 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I wish to express the greatest anxiety at the escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territory following Israel's decision to open a new entrance to the archaeological tunnel in East Jerusalem which runs under Arab property along the western wall of the Al-Haram al-Sharif, the third-largest site of Islam.

According to reports in the media, protest demonstrations by Palestinians were met with live ammunition, rubber bullets and tear gas by Israeli troops. Clashes have taken place in the West Bank towns of Ramallah, Bethlehem, Halhoul near Hebron, Jenin, and Qalqilya, as well as in the Gaza Strip. There have been reports that Israeli troops entered areas under the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority, and that gunfire was exchanged with Palestinian policemen. The latest press dispatches indicate that 40 Palestinians and 11 Israelis have been killed, and several hundred have been injured, the highest toll since the intifadah.

The Committee wishes to remind the international community that these tragic developments follow repeated warnings about the devastating consequences for Palestinian hopes and living conditions, of the delayed implementation by Israel of the agreements already reached, its prolonged closure of the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, the resumption of land confiscation and settlement, and actions against Palestinian property and institutions in Jerusalem. The Committee believes that current events demonstrate the fragility of the peace process and calls on Israel urgently to reverse its measures, to promote reconciliation with the Palestinian people and to resume substantive negotiations towards a just final settlement in accordance with international legitimacy.

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The Committee further believes that the current serious situation engages the responsibility of the Security Council for the maintenance of peace and security in the area, and associates itself with the call for an urgent meeting of the Council to consider the developments in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 35, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ibra Deguène KA
Chairman of the
Committee on the Exercise
of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People